



Working Through a Sign Language Interpreter

Instructions, Tips, and Hints for Communicating with Confidence

What Can You Expect?

- The interpreter will take care of optimizing the environment, as needed, to ensure effective communications and may suggest moving seating or adjusting lighting.
- The interpreter is ready for your content and will always ask for clarification for vocabulary, acronyms, and concepts with which he or she are not familiar.
- The interpreter will not participate in group activities, share personal opinions, or engage in conversations while interpreting.
- It is clearer if the interpreter speaks as him or herself prior to, or following, the assignment. Otherwise, it becomes difficult to know who is communicating.

What is the Role of the Sign Language Interpreter?

- The interpreter is working to facilitate communication between those who use spoken English and those who use American Sign Language (ASL).
- The interpreter is bound by a Code of Professional Conduct (see <http://rid.org/coe.html> for actual tenets).
- The Code requires interpreters to keep all information learned while interpreting confidential, to refrain from participating in proceedings where they are interpreting, and to behave in a professional manner while interpreting.
- The main thing to remember is that interpreters are not intentionally unfriendly or reluctant to join in. They just need to stay within the operational constraints while they are working in order to remain effective!

What Do You Need to Do?

- Be yourself as much as possible and communicate in a way that feels best.
- Try to look at the Deaf person rather than the interpreter. The interpreter may actually stand next to and slightly behind you so that the Deaf person can see you both. This often makes it easier for people to look at each other directly and feel less tempted to look at the interpreter.
- Speak in the first person. There is no need for you to say things like “Tell her to meet me at 3 p.m.” Just telling the Deaf person to “Meet me at 3 p.m.” is sufficient.
- Take turns and speak one at a time in large groups. Interpreters can only attend to one spoken message at a time and they don’t want to miss any of your important comments.

Ask Questions

- Usually, people with disabilities are glad to give you more information if you ask and are not so hung up on the political correctness of how you ask. Don't be afraid to show some interest and learn more.
- Often, the Deaf person has a lot of knowledge to share about using interpreters, so start with them.
- If you do have questions about interpreting as a profession, feel free to ask the interpreters after your meeting. They are often more than glad to share what they know.

Quick Tips

- Maintain good eye contact with a Deaf person when in conversation.
- Don't worry about offending the interpreter if you ignore them. They actually like it while they are working.
- Ask them for help. It's what they are there for!
- Deaf civil servants manage their own interpreting needs at GSFC so they are also experts, who can help you with questions.

Thank You!

- Goddard has two resources for sign language interpreters.
 - The EEO Office for general use
<http://terpschedule.gsfc.nasa.gov/login.cfm>
 - AETD Directorate for AETD purposes
<https://aetdinterpreter.gsfc.nasa.gov//login.cfm>
- For additional information, please contact us at **301-286-8640 (x6-8640)** or via e-mail at **aetdterp@yahoo.com** or **nbender@pop500.gsfc.nasa.gov**